



News Release

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Rod Betit Accepts Leadership Position in Alaska Utah Department of Health Executive Director Leaves a Legacy of Progress

After 16 years of service to Utah citizens, Utah Department of Health Executive Director Rod Betit has accepted a position as the President of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. Betit will leave Utah with a portfolio of health care improvements that has made Utahns healthier, provided better access to health insurance, kept costs lower than most states and made Utah a safer place to live.

“Rod has been a catalyst for tremendous progress in the way we care for the health and safety of Utahns,” says Gov. Mike Leavitt. “More people in Utah have health insurance, are immunized and can afford health care because of Rod Betit’s innovative contributions. I am grateful for his exemplary service and recognize that Alaska’s healthcare community is immediately stronger with his leadership.”

Betit is leaving Utah, in part, to be closer to his aging father and in-laws who reside in Alaska. He will end his service with the health department on October 8, 2003, and begin his employment on October 15, 2003, in Juneau, Alaska. Betit will continue to maintain a home in Utah.

Betit’s innovation and personal mark has been evident in the development of many crucial and significant programs benefiting Utah citizens. His management brand, which he calls, “Strategic Doing,” has mobilized programs to carry multiple public health initiatives forward. A few of the more prominent achievements include the following:

- Creation of the Primary Care Network (PCN); Utah is the only state that has been given the authority by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to move forward on this type of health care benefit. PCN began accepting applications in July of 2002 and 16,400 people are currently enrolled.
- Leadership in the design and administration of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Over 61,000 Utah children have been served by this program since its inception and uninsured rates for children in Utah are at the lowest point ever at 6.8%
- Champion of the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act of 1994. The Act prohibits the possession of lighted tobacco products in enclosed indoor places of public access and publicly owned buildings and offices, and requires non-public workplaces to

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establish smoking policies that either ban smoking altogether or that provide for approved areas where smoking is permitted.

- Development of the Flex Care Program which allows individuals to access Medicaid services at home rather than only in nursing facilities. To date, nearly 400 individuals have benefited from Flex Care.

“I am extremely proud of each and every one of our employees who work tirelessly to improve access to healthcare and prevent of disease,” said Betit. “Our accomplishments wouldn’t have been possible without the support of Governor and Mrs. Leavitt. In addition, I’ve got a strong team here that is capable and competent to continue moving our priority initiatives forward.”

Betit began his Utah service in 1987 as the Director of Health Care Financing, the entity in Utah that runs Medicaid. In 1992, he became the Utah Department of Health Executive Director. Betit has been responsible for an agency of more than 1,200 employees with an annual budget in excess of \$1 billion. On April 13, 1995, Governor Leavitt asked Betit to become Executive Director of the Department of Human Services while retaining his position as Executive Director of the UDOH. The Department of Human Services is the largest agency in state government. On September 30, 1997, Mr. Betit returned to the Department of Health as the full-time Executive Director.

Prior to coming to Utah in 1987, Mr. Betit directed the Medical Assistance Program in Alaska for 12 years, which included responsibility for the state's assistance programs. Betit has served on numerous local and national health care reform committees. He is a nationally recognized Medicaid expert in the field of health care financing and is widely viewed on a state and regional basis as an expert on health care reform.

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association is a private membership organization representing about 65 percent of the health care workforce in Alaska and is made up of hospitals, nursing homes, community clinics and home health groups. The Association provides: legislative and regulatory advocacy at all levels of government; acts as a steward of resources by supporting fiscally responsible initiatives; provides health information to members and the public; works to improve the health status of all Alaskans; and remains committed to advancing knowledge about health through education and training to the members of its organization.

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